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**COUNTERFEIT
CONTINENTAL CURRENCY
GOES TO WAR**

By

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*The story of British use of counterfeits in an attempt to crush the
American Revolution*

COUNTERFEIT CONTINENTAL CURRENCY GOES TO WAR

By

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THE PREPARATION and distribution of counterfeit Continental currency during the American Revolution under the authorization and with the active participation of the British government appears to be the first time in history when counterfeiting was used not primarily for personal gain but as a means of winning a war by undermining the enemy's public confidence in the economic stability

of its government. It is not only surprising that there is an unequivocal confession to such an accusation, but that similar practices were subsequently adopted by the English in the French Revolution, by the French in Napoleon's conquest of Austria, by the Union printers in the War between the States and in other conflicts and are now considered and guarded against in the strategy of modern warfare.

THE AMERICAN ACCUSATIONS

The Continental Congress on Jan. 2, 1779⁽¹⁾ in calling for redemption of bills of credit approved May 20, 1777 at Philadelphia and April 11, 1778 at Yorktown stated that "counterfeits of those emissions have lately been issued by our enemies at New York, and are found to be spreading and increasing fast in various parts of these United States * * *." A circular letter from the Board of Treasury to the states dated January 13, 1779 accused "our enemies of the highest rank" of counterfeiting which was described in the preliminary draft of the letter as taking place "from their Garrison at New York."⁽²⁾

Thomas Paine in referring to counterfeiting had previously demonstrated his mastery of the use of invectives when on March 21, 1778,

at Lancaster, Penn., he wrote "To Gen. Sir William Howe" an open letter over the signature "Common Sense," stating:

You, sir, have abetted and patronized the forging and uttering counterfeit continental bills. In the same New York newspapers in which your own proclamation under your master's authority was published, offering, or pretending to offer, pardon and protection to these states there were repeated advertisements of counterfeit money for sale, and persons who have come officially from you, and under the sanction of your flag, have been taken up in attempting to put them off.

* * * You, sir, have the honor of adding a new vice to the military catalogue; and the reason, perhaps, why the invention was reserved for you, is, because no general before was mean enough even to think of it.⁽³⁾

1. On Dec. 16, 1778 after considerable debate Congress resolved that it was necessary to withdraw these issues but did not make the redemption call until Jan. 2, 1779.
2. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 136 III, folio 7; See: *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of Jan. 13, 1779.
3. Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, (Middletown; New Jersey, 1839), Number V, p. 135.

Eric P. Newman, St. Louis, Mo., relates the little known story of a type of economic warfare with which our forefathers were confronted. The accompanying descriptions simplify the identification of these counterfeit bills.

Reprinted in book form

The audacious advertisement to which Paine referred appeared in New York newspapers on April 14, 1777 and proved that the distributors had no profit motive, but were contriving to undermine the American people's confidence in their own paper money. It relied on Tories and cheats to put false notes into circulation. It is unique in history and read as follows:

Persons going into other Colonies may be supplied with any Number of counterfeit Congress-Notes, for the Price of the Paper per Ream. They are so neatly and exactly executed that there is no Risque in getting them off, it being almost impossible to discover, that they are not genuine. This has been proved by Bills to a very large Amount, which have already been successfully circulated.

Enquire for Q.E.D. at the Coffee-House, from 11 P.M. to 4 A.M. during the present month.⁽⁴⁾

General Washington recognized the danger of this advertisement and in sending a copy to the President of Congress from *his* headquarters at Morristown on April 18, 1777 stated:

Staff
New Jersey
I have inclosed a Copy of an Advertisement published in Gaine's Paper of the 14th, which shews that no Artifices are left untried by the Enemy to injure us. Before the appearance of this unparalleled piece, I had heard, that a person was gone from York to Rhode Island with a Quantity of Counterfeit Money.⁽⁵⁾

The earliest indication that there was British coöperation in counterfeiting Continental currency was evidence given in connection with the indictment of George and John Folliott. It was said that these men in January, 1776 engaged in counterfeiting Continental currency (the

denomination
\$30 bill of the May 10, 1775 emission) in New York Harbor on board the British warship, H.M.S. *Phoenix*.⁽⁶⁾ *the Continental*

In an appeal made by Congress in May, 1778 to the people, urging them to continue to support the American cause, it was asked, "What, then, are the reasons that your money hath depreciated?" and one of the answers given was "because their (your enemy's) agents have villainously counterfeited your bills." It then continued, "How is this dangerous disease to be remedied?" and answered, "Let the several legislatures sink their respective emissions, that so, there being but one kind of bills, there may be less danger of counterfeits."⁽⁷⁾

Counterfeiting (probably of part of the issue of Sept. 26, 1778) was reported by the American general, Alexander McDougal, in a letter written March 25, 1779 from headquarters at Peekskill, New York, to Pres. Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania in which it is stated: "He (the enemy) is now counterfeiting another emission, which will soon be out."⁽⁸⁾

Gen. Washington on Sept. 8, 1779 forwarded from West Point to the President of Congress an intelligence report which advised of the British preparation "of a new emission of bills of sixty dollars lately done in New York." The intelligence agent had secured and enclosed such a note (the Sept. 26, 1778 emission) and went on to say: "The person from whom I received it informed me that a great quantity of this kind is put into the country by way of Kingsbridge and Bergen."⁽⁹⁾

4. *New York Gazette*, April 14, 1777; *Weekly Mercury*, April 14, 1777; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, May 13, 1777; mentioned in *Connecticut Courant*, May 12, 1777. See: Kenneth Scott, "New Hampshire Tory Counterfeiters Operating from New York City," *The New York Historical Society Quarterly*, Jan. 1950, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, p. 38; Frank Moore, *Diary of the American Revolution*, New York, 1860, Vol. I, p. 440.

5. *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, Washington, D. C., 1931 et seq., Vol 7, p. 434.

6. Kenneth Scott, "A British Counterfeiting Press in New York Harbor, 1776," *The New York Historical Society Quarterly*, April-July, 1955, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2-3, p. 117.

7. "An Address of the Congress to the Inhabitants of the United States of America," *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of May 8, 1778.

8. William B. Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed*, (Philadelphia; 1847), Vol. II, p. 58. See: Henry Phillips, Jr., *Continental Paper Money*, (Roxbury, Mass.; 1866) p. 114.

9. *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 16, p. 255.

George Washington again affirmed the accusation in a letter from Morristown, N. J., dated Dec. 7, 1779, written to the President of Congress, in which he stated, "I have received a letter from a confidential correspondent in New York * * *, But the most important part of the letter relates to the indefatigable endeavor

ours of the enemy to increase the depreciation of our currency, by increasing its quantity of counterfeits."⁽¹⁰⁾ Were these accusations true or was the counterfeiting undertaken by Tories and defrauders with only the passive sanction of the British military personnel?

an official

THE TROJAN HORSE OF COUNTERFEITS

at Lancaster, Pennsylvania

The improper use of a British wagon train proceeding under a flag of truce gave rise to "the idea of a Trojan Horse travelling thro' our land, not filled with men but most probably with the more dangerous Enemy, Counterfeited Continental money * * *."⁽¹¹⁾ Gen. Howe had requested permission to bring clothing and medical supplies to the British, German and Tory prisoners held by the Americans. Gen. Washington, in an effort to secure exchanges of prisoners and better treatment for American prisoners in British hands, granted passports for a wagon train with the requested supplies to go from British-occupied Philadelphia to Lancaster escorted by two American officers.

During the journey the wagon train was halted by the Americans at the Spread Eagle public house on the ground that the British had blocked shipments to American prisoners. It was then determined that the British had sent two more officers than their passports called for and Capt. McLeod and Lt. Sterling were asked to leave the wagons and return to Philadelphia. During the delay caused by this controversy a heavy rain soaked some of the shipment including two bags full of Continental bills of credit. Capt. James Christy, one of the American escort, reported that the bags were opened and after the contents were dried they were sent back to Philadelphia with McLeod and Sterling. Christy also indicated that he previously had slept on one of the bags and realized he "had

had a very costly pillow." Sterling expressed surprise at the discovery of the currency and said he was ignorant of its inclusion in the shipment. It was not ascertained whether these bills of credit were counterfeit, but from subsequent events such a conclusion may be drawn.

Capt. Christy stayed with the wagon train for four days and by the time it arrived at Lancaster the probability that the wagon train was among other things being used to distribute counterfeit Continental money was recognized by the Americans. Proof was obtained in Lancaster when one of the wagon drivers passed a counterfeit \$6 Continental bill (May 20, 1777 emission). This driver had five more of these same counterfeits on his person. Three other wagon drivers were arrested and searched and more of the same counterfeits were found on each, but the officers were not searched because of their immunity under the flag of truce. The entire contents of the wagons were detained and all of the party were confined. To add to the confusion the British claimed that Mr. Herbert, a Lancaster innkeeper, overcharged the convoy for necessities and that they had to pay specie at the same rate as paper money.⁽¹²⁾

The situation was reported by Pennsylvania authorities to Gen. Washington on Jan. 22, 1778 and it was brought to the attention of the assembled Continental Congress on January 26. For a venture which was to create goodwill in the British

10. *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 17, p. 230.

11. Letter dated Jan. 26, 1778 from Gen. Daniel Roberdeau at Yorktown to Pres. Thomas Wharton of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Archives (1st Series), Vol. VI, p. 206.

12. See: Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. VI, pp. 200, 201, 206, 214, 216, 217, 233 and 268.

and American relationship as to prisoners it could not have caused more difficulty. On January 26 Washington ordered the wagons and their contents released and the two officers, the doctor and his two attendants freed because he had authorized his aides to issue passports to them.¹³ Neither the contents of the wagons nor the officers were searched for counterfeit money, but two of the wagon drivers were held for trial. Two sergeants (apparently wagon drivers) who were permitted to leave with the British party left the group on the return journey and were arrested for molesting women on farms far off the route back to Philadelphia.

Congress on January 30 ordered an investigation of the entire matter by the Board of War. The Pennsylvania authorities who had uncovered this plot were angered by Washington's action because they felt that the flag of truce was violated by the British use of counterfeits. Washington's position was excused by the Board of War in a letter to Pres. Wharton of Pennsylvania dated Jan. 31, 1778 on the ground that Washington did not have information of the improper behavior of the group, an allegation which was not accurate. Washington did not wish minor violations of a flag of truce to interfere with his prisoner exchange negotiations. Washington excused the British for sending two more officers than stipulated because he felt the size of the wagon train made it reasonable to have them. The army justified the innkeeper's prices on the ground that the same prices would have been asked for payment in Continental currency and no premium for specie payment was permitted by law.

Pennsylvania claimed that "Congress has no right to interfere in our civil policy" as the Pennsylvania statute passed March 20, 1777 authorized the punishment of persons knowingly passing counterfeit Continental money. The whole affair

was embarrassing to the Americans and all of its goodwill value was destroyed. It left the members of Congress from Pennsylvania at odds with other members of Congress. Congress on April 14, 1778 received the report of the evidence collected by the Board of War with respect to the wagon train and promptly referred it to a new committee in order to avoid further discussion and controversy and the matter was buried in that committee.

Two of the wagon drivers were to be tried on April 10, 1778 and in assembling the evidence Washington wrote on April 1, 1778 from headquarters at Valley Forge to Thomas McKean, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania:

* * * I should be ready to afford every probable means of procuring honest testimony, to the two persons now under confinement for passing counterfeit Continental Money, But it cannot be supposed that General Howe would permit persons to come out of Philadelphia to give evidence in a matter, which by being traced fairly back would fix the issuing counterfeit Money upon some of his own party. A thing which he has affected to treat as not having the least foundation in truth. Besides I very much doubt whether he would not consider the suffering persons to come out to give evidence in our Courts, as in some measure acknowledging their authority and jurisdiction, which he has ever cautiously avoided.

Upon the whole Sir, I think it will be no purpose to send in for the evidences required, who if they were permitted to come out would only endeavor to make it appear that the prisoners did not know the money was counterfeit. * * *(14)

The prisoners claimed in their defense that the Pennsylvania statute made it a felony to pass counterfeits of only those issues of Continental currency emitted prior to the passage of the Pennsylvania law, but not subsequent to its passage. The Pennsylvania laws passed March 20, 1777 provided the death penalty for counterfeiting or knowingly passing or distributing counterfeits of "any of the bills of credit emitted and

13. *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 10, pp. 351, 355 and 356.

14. *Id.* Vol. 11, p. 196

made current by any of the resolves aforesaid of the honorable Continental Congress * * *."⁽¹⁵⁾ Thomas Paine and many others believed that this language merely distinguished the source of the money being protected from issues authorized by other states and that the word "emitted" did not refer to any particular time or date of issue.⁽¹⁶⁾ The Continental counterfeits in question being those in imitation of the May 20, 1777 authorization by Congress were subsequent to the March 20, 1777 law of Pennsylvania. The court held that the Pennsylvania statute did not apply to the May 20, 1777 emission and that the wagon driver who passed the counterfeit was guilty at most of a fraud, but being an enemy alien was not subject to local laws covering minor offences. The other defendant on whose person counterfeits were merely found was summarily freed.

This interpretation was confirmed

in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in 1789 in a civil suit which referred to the wagon train incident as a precedent.⁽¹⁷⁾ Pennsylvania remedied this defect by passing a statute at Lancaster on May 25, 1778, protecting Continental currency emitted between March 20, 1777 and May 25, 1778 and finally on November 26, 1779 at Philadelphia passed a counterfeiting law covering all Continental Congress emissions and all emissions of every American state.

The Trojan Horse full of counterfeits was discovered in time and the minor participants trapped, but loopholes in the ~~act~~ were found for them. As Thomas Paine humorously said of the incident, quoting from a comment once made by a member of the English House of Commons, "There never was but one Act which a man might not creep out of it, i.e. the Act which obliges a man to be buried in woollen."^(18 ante)

THE ACCIDENTAL BRITISH CONFESSION

The idea of counterfeiting Continental currency probably came to the attention of the British through a prominent doctor and politician, Dr. Benjamin Church, Director General of Hospitals of the Continental Army, who was embarrassed financially by living beyond his means. His brother-in-law, John Fleming, was a printer. When in September of 1775 a letter in code giving military information to the British at Newport, Rhode Island, was intercepted, Washington reported the matter to Congress⁽¹⁸⁾ and Church was jailed. Church's interest in counterfeiting was reported in a letter dated February 14, 1776 from Arthur Lee, American representative in London, which read:

Great expectations, too, are entertained from treachery in the provincials. Dr. Church was in league with others, particularly Fleming the printer. This I have from a ministerial authority which may be depended on. They will endeavor to depreciate the Congress paper by throwing in forged notes.⁽¹⁹⁾

Every effort was made by the British to deny and ridicule any accusation of participation in counterfeiting. When Gen. John Burgoyne surrendered on Oct. 16, 1777 at Saratoga to the Americans under Gen. Horatio Gates, the enemy troops, pursuant to the terms of the Treaty of Convention, were to be permitted to return to Europe. A delay in so doing arose because of disagree-

15. Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1782, pp. 7, 51, 54, 130 and 241.

16. Letter dated April 11, 1778 written at Lancaster to Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress. See: Moncure D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, New York, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 102.

17. *Johnson v. Hocker*, 1, Dallas 406 (U. S. Supreme Court Reports), Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, January Term, 1789.

18. Letter dated Oct. 5, 1775, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 4, p. 9.

19. Letter addressed to Lt. Gov. Colden of New York in the event of its capture, but apparently sent by messenger to Samuel Adams. *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, edited by Francis Wharton, Washington, 1889, Vol. 2, p. 78; Vol. 1, pp. 521 and 657.

ments about paying for provisions for American prisoners in British hands and because the British had purchased supplies with counterfeit Continental currency.

Gen. Sir William Howe, commander of the British forces in America, wrote to Gen. Washington from Philadelphia on Feb. 5, 1778 that the detention of Burgoyne's troops was in part grounded "not only upon a requisition of mine for provisions to be sent in for the subsistence of the prisoners in my possession, and for the purchase of other necessities, but upon a forgery by my agents, emissaries, and abettors, of what are called continental bills of credit. This last allegation is too illiberal to deserve a serious answer."⁽²⁰⁾ Howe used this opportunity to belittle Continental currency as well as to be evasive in answering the accusation of counterfeiting made by Gen. Heath of the American forces.

The American frigate *Deane*, on Aug. 9, 1779, captured the *Glencairn*, a British ship en route from Glasgow to British-occupied New York. The report of Commodore Samuel Nicholson, of the *Deane*, to the Continental Congress, as published in the *Virginia Gazette* of Oct. 2, 1779, stated:

On board the *Glencairn*, a person says he had in charge a box, which was to be delivered to some person in New York, but upon our coming up with them and the ship striking, threw it overboard; upon which we went immediately after it, and with difficulty got it before it sunk, when upon examination we found it contain materials for counterfeiting our currency, consisting of types, paper with silk and isinglass in it &c. We have however determined to secure the person, as we believe him to be the sole intender of the villainy: The box we have on board and shall bring it with us to Boston.

A conclusion can readily be drawn that since New York was the des-

tinuation of the *Glencairn*, the counterfeiting of Continental paper money was intended rather than the counterfeiting of any separate state issue. This is also corroborated by the paper containing mica and silk. The inclusion of type indicated a desire to improve the quality of counterfeits since most counterfeits of earlier Continental issues were made from engraved copper plates and were more readily distinguishable from the genuine notes than typeset counterfeits. As to whether the captured passenger was "the sole intender of the villainy" is an opinion which, no doubt, was modified by the American authorities on further investigation.

It has been stated that a shipload of counterfeit Continental currency en route to America was captured by a privateer,⁽²¹⁾ but since this is at best an extravagant exaggeration without any source citation it cannot be used as evidence of such counterfeits being prepared in England. Having counterfeits sent from England to America was like bringing coals to Newcastle. The *Glencairn* incident, above described, probably gave rise to this tale.

The counterfeit Continental currency which was captured by the Americans from the British armed forces in the vicinity of New York, was in very large quantities, further indicating New York as its source. In January, 1780, during a raid by Maj. Lee's Rangers on a British outpost within one-half mile of the lighthouse on Sandy Hook, about \$45,000 in counterfeit Continental money was obtained along with seven prisoners, some hard money and some dry goods.^(21a) When Capt. Marriner, in the early morning of April 20, 1780, seized the British ships *Blacksnake* and *Morning Star* at anchor, off Sandy Hook and brought his prizes into Egg Harbor, N. J., much Continental currency was reported to have been found on board.^(21b)

20. *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by Jared Sparks, Boston, 1834, Vol. V, p. 535 (appendix).

21. Henry Phillips, Jr., *Continental Paper Money*, Roxbury, Mass., 1866, p. 71; *Coin Collector's Journal*, May 1944, p. 70.

21a New Jersey Archives, Second Series, Vol. IV, p. 134.

21b New Jersey Archives, Second Series, Vol. IV, p. 351.

The excitement in America must have run high when an American privateer intercepted a British vessel carrying a letter from Sir Henry Clinton, Commander in Chief of the British forces in North America, to Lord George Germain, British Secretary of State. The message written on Jan. 30, 1780 from Savannah, Ga., stated:

I should be wanting to my civil commission, in closing this letter, without a few reflections on the present state of the money of America. Every day teaches me the futility of calculations founded on its failure. No experiments suggested by your Lordship; no assistance that could be drawn from the power of gold, or the arts of counterfeiting, have been left unattempted. But the currency like the widow's cruize of oil, has not failed the Congress. * * * I shall, nevertheless, my Lord continue while I have the honor to command in America, assiduous in the application of those means entrusted to my care; if they cannot work its (the Continental currency's) destruction, yet they embarrass Government, * * *.

This letter was published at Philadelphia on April 8, 1780 in the *Pennsylvania Journal* and later that year in England.⁽²²⁾

It is an incontestable admission that the British civil government as well as military leaders approved and directed the counterfeiting of American paper money.

Capt. Nathan Hale during the short period between his capture as an American spy and his execution

at New York on Sept. 22, 1776 was in the custody of a British officer named Cunningham. The counterfeiting of Continental currency and the forging of the signatures of its signers at New York apparently helped Cunningham to develop a bad habit subsequently leading to his untimely end. Cunningham was convicted and hanged for forgery in London on Aug. 10, 1791.⁽²³⁾

Benjamin Franklin in his eightieth year wrote an ironical essay concerning American debts to British merchants in which he clearly analyzed the effect of British counterfeiting of Continental currency as follows:

Paper money was in those times our universal currency. But, it being the instrument with which we combated our enemies, they resolved to deprive us of its use by depreciating it; and the most effectual means they could contrive was to counterfeit it. The artists they employed performed so well, that immense quantities of these counterfeits, which issued from the British government in New York, were circulated among the inhabitants of all the States, before the fraud was detected. This operated considerably in depreciating the whole mass, first, by the vast additional quantity, and next by the uncertainty in distinguishing the true from the false; and the depreciation was a loss to all and the ruin of many. It is true our enemies gained a vast deal of our property by the operation; but it did not go into the hands of our particular creditors; so their demands still subsisted, and we were still abused for not paying our debts!⁽²⁴⁾

COUNTERFEITERS AND PASSERS

Hundreds of skilled and unskilled counterfeiters had been engaged in counterfeiting the various paper cur-

rency issues of the individual British colonies in America prior to the Revolution,⁽²⁵⁾ and patriotism did

22. *The Remembrances or Impartial Depository of Public Events*, J. Almon, London, 1780, Vol. X, p. 40. See: Albert S. Bolles, *The Financial History of the United States from 1774 to 1789*, New York, 1879, p. 152.

23. Charles N. Schmall, "Sidelights on Numismatics," *The Numismatist*, Sept. 1932, Vol. XLV, p. 556.

24. "The Retort Courteous," published in 1786, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, edited by Albert Henry Smyth, New York, MacMillan Co., 1907, Vol. X, p. 111. Also, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, edited by John Bigelow, New York, Putnam's, 1888, Vol. X, p. 129.

25. The following comprehensive studies of the history of counterfeiting in America principally prior to the Revolutionary War have been written by Kenneth Scott: "New Hampshire Tory Counterfeiters operating from New York City," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, 1950, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1; "Counterfeiting in Colonial Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1953, Vol. 61, No. 1; *Counterfeiting in Colonial New York*, American Numismatic Society, Notes and Monographs, No. 127, New York, 1953; *Counterfeiting in Colonial Pennsylvania*, American Numismatic Society, Notes and Monographs, No. 132, New York, 1955; "Counterfeiting in Colonial Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 1956, Vol. 51, No. 2.

Earliest Counterfeiting in New Jersey, Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, January 1957, Vol 75 No. 1 p. 18; *The Great Epidemic of Coining*, Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, April 1957 Vol 75 No 2 p. 12; *Counterfeiting in Colonial New Hampshire*, Historical New Hampshire, December 1957, Vol 13, p. 3

Counterfeiting in Colonial America (New York, 1957);

not influence many of them to give up that practice when currency was printed under the authority of the Continental Congress. The latter did not pass laws with respect to counterfeiting to protect its paper money as it had no means of enforcing them. On June 24, 1776, Congress recommended to all of the States that each pass laws against counterfeiting Continental currency or knowingly passing such counterfeits, such laws to be similar to those passed to protect each state's own paper money issues. Because some of the states did not pass appropriate laws Congress on Jan. 1, 1779 repeated its request for legislation.

The first counterfeiting noted in the records of the Congress was reported on April 30, 1776 by the delegates from New Jersey and on June 7, 1776 the investigating committee reported the jailing of the guilty parties in Morris County, N. J. On May 7, 1777 Elias Boudinot's letter enclosing a counterfeit \$30 Continental bill was read to Congress. The modern historical novel, *Oliver Wiswell* by Kenneth Roberts, is replete with instances of counterfeiting of Continental currency, which, although fictional, were based upon the tales about Abel Buell.⁽²⁶⁾ In the spring of 1776 Isaac Young of Cold Spring, Nassau Island, N. Y., who had a counterfeiter (Henry Dawkins) working at his home announced "that he would pay his debts this summer in Congress money" and was promptly ordered arrested by the Provincial Congress of New York.⁽²⁷⁾ A proclamation by the government of Delaware ordered the arrest of Dorman Losland, a former sheriff of Sussex County, for passing \$30 counterfeits dated May 10, 1775 (probably some of those made by the Folliott brothers in New York harbor).⁽²⁸⁾

Copper plates for counterfeiting Continental currency of the denomi-

nations of two-thirds of a dollar, \$4 and \$30 were discovered in the possession of James Steward in York County, Pa., just prior to June 27, 1777, along with specimens of currency struck from those plates, one specimen being a counterfeiter's error, the plate for a \$4 bill being used on one side and the plate for a \$30 bill being used on the other. The confiscated plates and bills were turned over by Col. Donaldson to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. The minutes of that body show that the counterfeiter escaped from jail shortly after his arrest and by Oct. 5, 1782 hope of finding the prisoner was abandoned as the plates were ordered to be destroyed, since their use as evidence for the prosecution was unlikely.

Under martial law capital punishment for espionage based primarily upon evidence of passing counterfeit Continental currency was enforced. At a court martial held Oct. 8, 1778 at Danbury, Conn., "David Farnsworth and John Blair were tried for being found about the Encampment of the Armies of the United States as Spies and having a large sum of counterfeit Money about them which they brought from New York, found guilty of the charges against them and sentenced (two thirds of the Court agreeing), to suffer death." Gen. Washington in a letter to Gen. Gates about the case stated "The crime of passing counterfeit Bills of Credit, by which our currency has been extremely depreciated, added to the strong suspicion of their being both Spies, will render it necessary to have them executed according to their Sentences."⁽²⁹⁾

David Gamble deserted the Continental Army and when counterfeits were found in his possession was ordered executed.⁽³⁰⁾ On March 18, 1778 a court martial sentenced Abel Jeans of Pennsylvania to 100 lashes

26. L. C. Wroth, *Abel Buell of Connecticut*, Acorn Club of Connecticut, 1926.

27. *American Archives*, edited by Peter Force, Fourth Series, Vol. V., p. 1497.

28. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 9, 1777.

29. *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, Washington, D. C., 1931 et seq., Vol. 13, p. 139; Vol. 13, p. 54.

30. General orders of Oct. 13, 1780, *Id.*, Vol. 20, p. 179.

British
and confinement at hard labor for the balance of the war for supplying the enemy with money, trading with them and buying and passing counterfeit Continental money.⁽³¹⁾

The quantity of counterfeit Continental currency found on those who were deliberately circulating those notes was often large. Thomas Cockayne had been caught in Sussex County, Pa., with 199 counterfeit \$30 bills in his possession or a total of \$5,970.⁽³²⁾ Jonathan Jennings, as reported in the *Virginia Gazette* of May 1, 1778 was jailed in Alexandria, Va., for passing one \$5 and one \$8 Continental note and had in his possession twenty-five \$5 notes dated Feb. 26, 1777, one \$6 note and eighty \$8 notes dated May 20, 1777, all counterfeit, making a total of \$771.

It was only natural that with many counterfeits in circulation individuals would innocently make payments in counterfeit currency and be greatly embarrassed by an alert recipient. It was difficult to prove innocence, and suspicion was often the result. On March 3, 1778 William Tod innocently paid out at Reading, Pa., cash including sixty-six \$6 Continental bills which he had been paid two days before at Pottstown. It was discovered that fifteen \$6 bills were counterfeit. Because the money was received and paid in the area around British-occupied Philadelphia where the British were circulating counterfeits, an intensive inquiry was made. In a letter to the public Tod stated:

* * * unless I take this method to vindicate my injured honour, malice may circulate the story, all nature may pronounce judgment, and I may lose the esteem of the good and virtuous, whose regard alone I wish to preserve. * * * I shall only remark, that if a man's character is to be censured, and his integrity suspected, from the single circumstance of passing fifteen counterfeit six dollar bills

in the payment of a sum of money, the most part of which consisted of bills of that denomination, every man may be liable to suspicion, censure and trouble.⁽³³⁾

Strong suspicion of counterfeiting fell upon James Smither (**Smithers**), a well-known Philadelphia engraver, who had made cuts for some issues of Pennsylvania currency issued prior to the Revolution. Thomas Paine in a letter to the President of the Continental Congress dated April 11, 1778 names Smither as being a participant in the counterfeiting of Continental currency for the British⁽³⁴⁾ and this general opinion was given support by the fact that when the British gave up the occupation of Philadelphia and returned to New York, Smither had also moved to New York. The Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania on June 15, 1778 issued a proclamation ordering James Smither along with others to answer charges of treason.⁽³⁵⁾

Counterfeiters rarely have an opportunity to do their work under the protection of a government, to be assisted by that government in securing supplies and equipment and not have to worry about distribution of their products. This was the opportunity afforded by the British to some American counterfeiters. Those Tories or cheats who were desirous of passing or distributing counterfeits had a much more lucrative, even though more dangerous, opportunity because British sponsored counterfeits were furnished at nominal cost.

Within areas occupied by the British counterfeiting was uncontrollable, but counterfeit Continental bills had to be taken elsewhere to be put into circulation. Thus passers had to be caught individually without the American authorities being able to destroy the primary source in most instances. Finally Congress had to

The British did not confiscate Continental Currency in occupied areas, but merely eliminated its circulation.

31. General Orders issued March 25, 1788 from Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge. *Id.*, Vol. 11, p. 142.
32. Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. V, p. 525.
33. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 18, 1778.
34. Moncure D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, New York, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 102.
35. "Continental Money," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March, 1863, Vol. XXVI, No. CLIV, p. 445. See: *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers*, by Mantle Fielding, New York, 1945.

(35½) *New York, Phillips, Jr., Continental Paper Money, (Probing Mass., 1866), p. 134.* 9

resort to a \$2000 reward to an informer whose testimony secured a

conviction and several such rewards were claimed and paid.⁽³⁶⁾

AN OFFICIAL DESCRIPTION OF COUNTERFEITS

An official printed broadside describing counterfeit Continental currency has apparently eluded numismatic researchers even though it is among the papers of the Continental Congress. It is entitled:

DESCRIPTION OF COUNTERFEIT BILLS which were done in Imitation of the True Ones ordered by the Honorable the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, Bearing Date 20th May, 1777, and 11th April, 1778.⁽³⁷⁾

At the bottom of the broadside in the handwriting of John Gibson, Auditor General, there is a warning as to the importance of the document, "Permit no Copy of these Descriptions to be taken unless at the Request of the Executive Authority of the State to be placed in Confidential Hands. — John Gibson, A. G."

This broadside was distributed in January, 1779. It described ~~only five~~ counterfeits, the \$6 and \$8 of the May 20, 1777, Philadelphia emission and three varieties of the \$40 note of the April 11, 1778, Yorktown issue. It indicates no knowledge of the other counterfeits of these two issues, namely the \$30 of May 20, 1777, and the \$4, ~~\$5~~, \$7 and \$20 of April 11, 1778. These omissions must have resulted in a large and unintentional redemption and destruction of unlisted counterfeits. ~~The Connecticut Courant~~ of Nov. 10, 1778 had already published a description of the \$5 counterfeit of April 11, 1778. No counterfeits of issues other than the two issues called for redemption are mentioned in the broadside. A most important fact pointed out in the broadside is that the first ~~four~~ specimens and the back of the ~~fifth~~ were struck from engraved copper plates and

not from set type and cuts as were the genuine.

Why all denominations of each of these two issues were called for redemption when only two denominations of one issue ~~and one of another~~ were known to be counterfeited is difficult to fathom. It had been strongly argued in Congress in December, 1778 that all earlier issues be redeemed and replaced. The confusion resulting from the redemption notice was worse than the counterfeits. The notes with which the called issues were to be redeemed were not ready and delays in the exchange were as much as 60 days. Depreciation was taking place at a rapid rate at that time and many holders had to travel substantial distances to official exchange agencies and spend money and time so doing. The called issues immediately lost their acceptability in normal transactions and merchants advertised that they would take in the called money for goods at prices which obviously were much higher than current.⁽³⁸⁾ William A. Atlee (no relation to James F. Atlee, the die sinker for copper coins who was a partner in Machin's Mills) wrote concerning the redemption notice to his brother, Samuel Atlee, a delegate in Congress from Pennsylvania:

Pray, my dear Brother, how comes it that Congress by their resolve relating to the two emissions of May, 1777 and April, 1778 have set the Country in such a ferment * * * it is rendered twenty-five p. cent worse than the other emissions, which God knows were sunk low enough before.⁽³⁹⁾

Due to the exigencies of war the original date for redemption of the May 20, 1777, and April 11, 1778,

36. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of June 19, 1780. Three instances of such rewards are reported by Henry Phillips, Jr., *Continental Paper Money*, p. 230-3.

37. This broadside is referred to in *Journals of the Continental Congress*. Vol. XV, p. 1451, item 238 under date of Jan. 2, 1779. It has been recently mended, but a small portion of the text has disintegrated.

38. Albert S. Bolles, *The Financial History of the United States from 1774 to 1789* New York, 1879, p. 154.

39. Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. VI, p. 212, (undated but apparently early in 1779).

DESCRIPTION OF COUNTERFEIT BILLS,

Which were done in Imitation of the True Ones ordered by the Honorable
the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,
Bearing Date 20th May, 1777, and 11th April, 1778.

EIGHT Dollar Bill, dated May 20, 1777, signed Jn. Taylor and Aq. Norris, is done from a Copperplate, the Letters of which are not only irregular, but by having been engraved, appear more delicate than in the true Bills, which are done with Type, have a smaller aspect, especially in the Words "Spanish milled, Silver, Philadelphia," &c.—The Figures 1777, as well on the back as the front, appear less than in the true Bills.—In the Border at the Top of the Bill over the Words "United States," the two L's in the Word "Dollars" are more irregular and more from a straight Line than in the true Bills.

Six Dollar Bills, dated May 20, 1777, signed Jn. Taylor and Aq. Norris, or R. Smith and A. McCallister, or G. Young and C. Lewis, are also done from a Copperplate, the Letters of which appear for the same Reason more delicate than in the true Bills, and are also more irregular, particularly the Word "entitles," which stands higher than the rest of the line, and the Y in the Word "Value" is placed too high and not on a line with the rest of the Word.—After the Words "Six Dollars" under the Device in the true Bills there is a full stop, in the Counterfeits there is none.—On the Back of the Bill the Leaf is much plainer in the Counterfeits than in the true Bills, the Letters there being also more delicate, and the Figures "1777" have a smaller Appearance than in the genuine Bills.

Forty Dollar Bill, dated April 11, 1778, signed D. Reintzel and S. Bryson, or D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, done from a Copperplate, of which the same Remark may be made as to the Delicacy or Neatness of the Letters as in the preceding Descriptions.—Yet the whole of the Letters in the Words "THE UNITED STATES," in the top Border of the Bill, appear stronger, tho' not so uniform or so well shaped as those in the true Bills.—In the Border at the right hand (or end) of the Counterfeit Bill the Words "FORTY DOLLARS" (which are in white Letters) are ill done, besides having an E instead of an F in the same.—The larger Leaf on the Back of the true Bills having beside the Branch at the upper end, five Branches on each Side of the Stem, the lowermost of which are not very plain and smaller than the rest, the two last mentioned are entirely omitted in these Counterfeits.

Another species of the Forty Dollar Bills of the same date, signed D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, also done from a Copperplate, of which the same Remark may be made as to the Delicacy or Neatness of the Letters as in the former Descriptions. The Letters however in the whole of the Bill are very irregular, several being larger than the adjoining ones, and almost all the lines crooked, some being placed too high and others too low. In the Border at the right Hand of the Counterfeit Bill the white Letters

Another Counterfeit Forty Dollar Bill, dated 11th April, 1778, signed J. Pomeroy and K. Davis, (who by the bye were never signers of Continental Money) the Back of which appears as if done from a Copperplate, and the Words in the front as if done with Types; the Borders and Devices as if cut in Metal. I am sorry to say that this Bill is rather so good an Imitation that it is really dangerous to most People. I will however point out a few other Marks, viz. The first N in the Word *Confederation* (in the Device) is not placed so square as in the true Bills, the last stroke of the said Letter leaning more than it should do; indeed the whole of the Letters of the Word *Confederation* are not quite so bold as those in the genuine Bills. The Stars in the Device appear more open in the Center of each of them than those in the true Bills, which appear mostly closed. In the Word *Forty* at the Top of the Bill the Tail of the y in the Counterfeits comes nearer to the Bottom of the t than in the true Bills; the o in the same Word appears on a Level with the rest of the Word, while in the true Bills it is placed rather lower than the r which follows it. In this Counterfeit also (as in the others) the larger Leaf on the Back (exclusive of the top Branch) has but four Branches on each Side thereof, while the true Bills have five Branches on each Side, of which the two lowermost are the most faint, as is already mentioned.

NOTE: In some of the Bills of different Denominations D. Reintzel is signed for J. Reintzel. It may be farther necessary to observe that it is very probable there may be other Names affixed as signers to some or all of the different Denominations than are noticed in the preceding Descriptions, having mentioned in the foregoing only such as I have seen.

Some Persons in the United States having been much alarmed on comparing of Bills of Credit, by finding Bills of the same Denomination and Date to differ from each other in respect to the Letters, some having broken letters and others not, and frequent Conclusions having been drawn that the former were true Bills, and the broken Letters were originally made as private or secret Marks: It is therefore become necessary to inform, That those were not intended as Marks, but that at the first Beginning of printing an Emulsion the Letters were whole, and that during printing the Emulsion, from hard Lumps or Gravel or Sand in the Paper, with the Force of the Press, those Letters at different Times were accidentally and unobtrusively broken.

*Permit no Copy of these Descriptions
to be taken, unless at the Request of the
Executive Authority of the State to be
placed in confidential Hands.*

John Gibson

34
Linda
misleading

emissions was extended first from June 1, 1779, to Jan. 1, 1780, and subsequently to Jan. 1, 1781.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In view of the prolonged period for redemption the great bulk of the genuine May 20, 1777, and April 11, 1778, issues were withdrawn from circulation. Those redeemed were at first ordered crossed, punch cancelled and burned, but subsequently the requirement of crossing and punch cancelling before burning was waived.⁽⁴¹⁾ On occasion genuine bills of these issues are found crossed in ink and since crossing customarily denotes a counterfeit it must be assumed that someone made a mistake in identification rather than that redeemed bills were not destroyed.

The precaution as to releasing to the public official descriptions of counterfeits of the May 20, 1777 and April 11, 1778 issues was motivated by a fear that specific differences would result in a prompt correction of the counterfeit plates. The circular letter of the Board of Treasury of Jan. 13, 1779 states:

The danger from counterfeits can only be avoided by calling in and exchanging the emissions, which have chiefly suffered by that species of fraud. To publish the marks of detection and still to leave the true bills current will not be prudent, as it must afford an opportunity for correcting defects and cheating more securely.⁽⁴²⁾

It should be noted that the word "chiefly" as used above indicates that counterfeits of other emissions were known to be in circulation, but not in sufficient quantity to be dangerous. The refusal to publish the marks of detection was a change in thinking, as John Gibson, Auditor General, had officially published in newspapers in 1777 descriptions of

the \$30 counterfeit of May 10, 1777 and the \$8 counterfeit of May 9, 1776 pursuant to the authority of the Board of Treasury.⁽⁴³⁾

Whether the decision of the Treasury Board and the Auditor General not to publish further descriptions of counterfeits was correct or not, it is clear that they did not realize that descriptions of the commonest Continental currency counterfeits had already been published in the press. The *Connecticut Courant* of Nov. 10, 1778 attempted to describe the \$40 and \$5 counterfeits of April 11, 1778, and the \$8 and \$6 counterfeits of May 20, 1777, as well as two varieties of the \$30 counterfeit of Feb. 26, 1777. Shopkeepers must have posted the clipping from the newspaper eliminating any possibility that passers of counterfeits would not become aware of the information.

It can be assumed that the well made counterfeits described in the broadside are definitely British sponsored counterfeits. ~~The \$6 and \$8 of May 20, 1777, appear to be of fine enough quality as well as one of the \$40 of April 11, 1778, but the other two varieties of the \$40 of April 11, 1778, are poorly made and may have been privately produced. Some of the omitted denominations of counterfeits of these issues also appear to be of fine enough quality to be distributed by the British.~~ However, there seems to be no specific way of determining by workmanship which counterfeits are British sponsored products. Since records show the source of many counterfeits as New York or from the hands of British military personnel we can conclude that the specific denominations so mentioned are British sponsored.

40. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of July 2, 1779 and March 28, 1780.

41. *Id.*, minutes of Feb. 26, 1779.

42. *Id.*, minutes of Jan. 13, 1779, *Virginia Gazette*, Feb. 19, 1779.

43. *Virginia Gazette*, June 13, 1777 and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 16, 1777.

DIFFICULTIES IN DISTINGUISHING COUNTERFEITS

The problem of distinguishing genuine from counterfeit notes was evident during the Revolutionary War. It was not only the "man in the street" who had difficulty detecting bad Continental notes, but also officialdom. The problem of the reimbursement of Virginia and Massachusetts officials for taking in counterfeit bills is in the records.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Congress on Nov. 29, 1780, warned its treasury commission who were receiving from the State loan offices the two Continental issues called for redemption to "take proper care to select all counterfeits if any happen to be among the bills so brought in to be destroyed."

Nathaniel Appleton, Commissioner of the United States Loan Office in Massachusetts wrote the Board of Treasury in Philadelphia on Jan. 27, 1779:

I find bills of the same date differ in some particulars and yet I can't decline either of them to be counterfeited, particularly seven dollar bills of April, 1778, differs in the word United at the top of the bills, yet neither of them copperplates, I should suspect the money was struck off by two presses or varied after striking off part. I shall be glad of information.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Newspaper editors attempted to warn the public to be careful of new counterfeit issues, but little could be gleaned from notices such as the following in the *Connecticut Courant* of May 5, 1777 which did not even state the date of authorization of the issue counterfeit: "Beware of counterfeit THIRTY DOLLARS Continental Bills, a particular description is not yet obtained, they are

badly executed, but may pass with the unwary."

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* of May 21, 1777 described the \$30 counterfeit dated May 10, 1775 by vague comparisons with the genuine and on July 16, 1777 described the \$8 counterfeit dated May 9, 1776 in similar fashion. These descriptions instead of being helpful created more chaos.

Even Henry Phillips, Jr., who in 1866 wrote his treatise on Continental paper money examined one "of the copper plates from which they were printed"⁽⁴⁶⁾ and although noticing the plate was altered from the April 11, 1778, Yorktown issue to the Sept. 26, 1778, Philadelphia issue did not realize that he was examining a plate prepared for making counterfeits since all genuine notes were printed from forms of movable type and line cuts and not from copper plates.

Some people assumed secret marks were used on the genuine bills. In fact in authorizing the issue of May 20, 1777, it was provided that the bills were to have such "ornaments, escutcheons and secret marks as the Board of Treasury shall direct." Because of fear of counterfeits genuine notes were sometimes refused as counterfeit. To clarify these impressions the January, 1779, broadside explained:

Some Persons in the United States having been much alarmed on comparing of Bills of Credit, by finding Bills of the same Denomination and Date to differ from each other in respect to the letters, some having broken Letters and others not, and frequent Conclusions having been

44. Henry Phillips, Jr., *Continental Paper Money*, Roxbury, Mass., 1866, p. 237.

45. *Id.*, p. 227.

46. *Id.*, p. 202.

drawn that the former were true Bills, and the broken Letters were originally made as private or secret Marks:

It is therefore become necessary to inform, That those were not intended as Marks, but that at the first Beginning of printing an Emission the Letters were whole, and that during printing the Emission, from hard Lumps or Gravel or Sand in the Paper, with the Force of the Press, those Letters at different Times were accidentally and unobservedly broken.

The cuts originally purchased for the first issue of notes, as well as the typeset portions, were used in subsequent emissions of the same denominations as specified by Congress except for changes in the date and place of authorization.⁽⁴⁷⁾ New cuts were made only when new denominations were added.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The wear on the cuts therefore resulted in many blurred impressions of those portions. Broken or worn type were sparingly replaced and the text often is weak on that account. When the forms were locked any letters out of register were not adjusted until the next date of authorization was inserted.

It was pointed out in the *Connecticut Courant*, Nov. 10, 1778, that counterfeit bills struck from engraved copper plates "look and feel smooth; the complexion of the bills differ very much from the true bills." Since the genuine bills were typeset the embossing effect of the letters on the thick paper can be readily felt on most genuine specimens. In spite of the fact that some counterfeits were also typeset this test would at least detect bills from engraved plates.

John Adams early in the war thought counterfeit detection was simple enough when he wrote his wife from Philadelphia on May 25,

1777, scolding her for accepting a New Hampshire counterfeit:

Let me entreat you not to take a shilling of any but Continental money or Massachusetts, and be very careful of that. There is a counterfeit continental bill abroad sent out of New York, but it will deceive none but fools, for it is a copper plate, easily detected, miserably done.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Certain counterfeits contain various forged signature combinations, so that signatures are of little assistance in detection. Red, brown and black inks for numbering and signing are usually like the originals, the Congress having on Dec. 11, 1775, provided for varying the color of ink in numbering. The varying amounts of inking of the genuine often caused official issues to be too dark, too light, or with some letters or designs not fully impressed. This inconsistency then and now renders detection of counterfeits by general appearance difficult. In fact the well made counterfeits often appear more natural than genuine issues. The perfection of one of the \$40 Yorktown issue was commented upon in the 1779 official broadside as follows: "I am sorry to say that this Bill is rather so good an Imitation that it is really dangerous to most People." It must be concluded that the near perfection of that counterfeit was primarily responsible for the decision to redeem the entire Yorktown series.

The same paper used for genuine Continental currency was sometimes used for counterfeits. Evidence exists that such paper was procured early in 1777 by forged documents from Jacob Agee, a Philadelphia papermaker.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The paper on which counterfeits are struck often contains mica as well as

47. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of Dec. 2, 1775; Feb. 21, 1776; May 22, 1776; and May 22, 1777.

48. In the *Journals of the Continental Congress* the minutes of Oct. 10, 1775 show reimbursement to David Rittenhouse of \$48 for 36 "cutts." New "cutts" for the April 11, 1778 issue were approved in the authorizing resolution. Likewise two new cuts for the \$50 and \$60 denominations were approved on Sept. 26, 1778 for the emission approved on that date.

49. *Letters of John Adams*, addressed to his wife, edited by Charles Francis Adams Boston, 1841, Vol. I, p. 231. See: Albert S. Bolles, *The Financial History of the United States from 1774 to 1789*, New York, 1879, p. 153.

50. Letter written Feb. 24, 1779 at Philadelphia by Peter Knight to John Warton, Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. V, p. 239.

colored threads in similitude to the protective features of the official paper for genuine issues. Late in 1779 an American spy in New York reported "as a matter of certainty, that reams of paper made for the last emission struck by Congress (the Jan. 17, 1779 issue) have been procured from Philadelphia."⁽⁵¹⁾ This must have been true because a Pennsylvania statute was passed on Nov. 26, 1779 making it a crime to manufacture paper similar to the paper on which Continental currency was printed. Specimens of the counterfeit \$80 note of the Jan. 17, 1779, issue even have a counterfeit watermark in the paper.

Most counterfeits were naturally made in high denominations because it was more rewarding to passers. Other denominations were, however, less suspected, and neither the British nor private counterfeiters neglected them.

In authorizing the new issue of Jan. 17, 1779, to be used to redeem the called emissions the circular of the Board of Treasury advised:

To defend the emission intended for the exchange from counterfeits the strongest guards will be devised, and it is expected that the marks of authenticity will be so obvious, and the difficulty of successful imitation so great, as to discourage the attempt or elude its effects.⁽⁵²⁾

The notes were printed partly in red and partly in black both in the vignette and in one cut and the paper on some denominations was watermarked with CONFEDERATION and on others UNITED STATES. At least two counterfeits of the \$80 denomination were made nevertheless. No doubt there would have been more, but as the notes were then approaching worthless-

ness there was little incentive for passers.

Some counterfeits are readily distinguishable because the back faces the wrong direction. In the genuine issues the eight notes (four notes high by two notes wide) of different denominations printed with one impression on each side required the backs to be placed properly or the denominations would be different on front and back. On all genuine notes, if the bill is turned over on the top edge of its front the top of the back will be on the left. Since counterfeits were struck from a single plate or form, the top of the back is on the right whenever the note was turned before feeding it into the press. Specimens of the counterfeit \$7 of July 22, 1776 and of the counterfeit \$6 and \$8 of May 20, 1777 are found with the top of the back on the right as well as the left.

Although counterfeit Continental currency is as interesting, historically, as genuine issues because of its British sponsorship, it is advisable for the collector to be able to recognize them easily. Positive identification of genuine notes can be accomplished by comparison with the unsigned proof sheets on blue paper officially distributed by Congress to the State Treasurers,⁽⁵³⁾ since specimens of all of these sheets exist. This, however, is not feasible because of the rarity of such sheets. Likewise identification of counterfeits by comparison with genuine notes is impractical not only because the redeemed issues are scarce, but also because one may not have another note of the same issue and denomination available. An effort, therefore, has been made to identify counterfeits independently in the accompanying table.

ALTERATIONS AND FICTITIOUS ISSUES

While alterations of genuine Continental currency from low denominations to higher ones were to be expected, these would be readily de-

tected from the vignettes and thus could not have been altered in quantity.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Alterations, however, of the date of issues called for redemp-

51. *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 17, p. 231.

52. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 136 III, folio 7.

53. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, minutes of Oct. 28, 1775.

54. A \$3 Continental bill raised to \$30 was in the evidence at the trial of Dr. Jonathan Gove, a New Hampshire Tory. *Miscellaneous State Papers*, New Hampshire Historical Society, Vol. 42, p. 104. A \$1 Continental bill was raised to \$6 by an overlay. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 5, 1777.

tion also took place, as a genuine \$40 bill of the April 11, 1778, Yorktown issue is known altered to April 15, 1777.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Much alteration of individual specimens would be unlikely, since making or passing counterfeits was more tempting.

There are also counterfeits which bear a fictitious date when no emis-

sion was actually authorized. These prevented comparison with the genuine, but would be readily detected within a short period after being in circulation. Specimens dated Nov. 22, 1775, July 2, 1777, and March 12, 1778, all of which dates are fictitious, are known in collections.

In W.C. Primmer the first of the latter date is illustrated in genuine

NEW YORK WATER WORKS COUNTERFEITS

In addition to sponsoring the issues of the Continental Congress the British participated in counterfeiting other American paper money. While accusations include Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania state issues, there is specific testimony in the American Archives as to British counterfeiting of the paper money of the City of New York known as the New York Water Works notes. On genuine Water Works notes a view of the proposed new pump and the headings were engraved by Elisha Gallaudet, and the balance was typeset and printed by Hugh Gainé of New York City.

The deposition of Israel Young, given on June 26, 1776, while the Americans still held New York, that Thomas Vernon told Young when they were in jail together that Ver-

non had on many occasions visited the British ship *Duchess of Gordon*, on which William Tryon, the British governor of New York, conducted official British activities in New York harbor during the early part of the Revolution; that Gov. Tryon was seen on board and often spoken to; that various types belonging to the New York printer, James Rivington, were on board as well as one of his printers; that Vernon saw them counterfeit Water Works notes there; that they had a chest full of such notes which were of excellent quality except that the paper seemed too thick; that Gov. Tryon had hired Henry Dawkins, a notorious counterfeiter, to come aboard to engrave currency plates; that Vernon was to transport Dawkins to the ship, but Dawkins got drunk and disappeared.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful for the encouragement and assistance continually given me by my friend, F. C. C. Boyd, in any early American numismatic research project I undertake. I appreciate the cooperation of Kenneth Scott for helpful suggestions for the text of this article and of Harley Freeman with respect to examination of specimens from his collection. As in all numismatic research I must acknowledge the

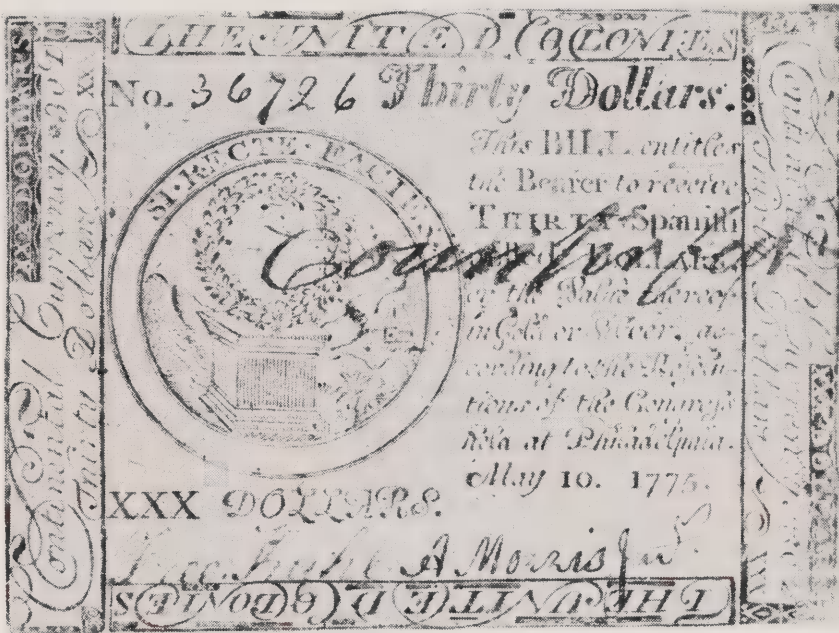
work heretofore done on the topic by John Richardson who acquainted me with the subject, and by Frank J. Katzen who previously published differences between some counterfeit and genuine notes for numismatists.⁽⁵⁶⁾ But for cooperation of the librarians at the Missouri Historical Society and the Mercantile Library of St. Louis and the patience of my wife this project would not be worth a Continental.

55. John W. Haseltine in *Description of the Paper Money Issued by the Continental Congress of the United States and the Several Colonies*, Philadelphia, 1872, states: "The following notes are in existence, but are probably counterfeits, as no record of their issue can be found: April 15, 1777, Yorktown, \$40; March 12, 1778, \$40." The writer has examined these specimens and finds the April 15, 1777 \$40 note is an alteration from a genuine April 11, 1778 \$40 note. The other note is a spurious counterfeit.

56. Frank J. Katzen, "Some Continental Currency Counterfeits," *The Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine*, Oct. 20, 1951, Vol. XVII, p. 841.

DESCRIPTIVE TABLE OF COUNTERFEITS

The following list of known counterfeits has been prepared from information from the January, 1779, official broadside, from a study of existing examples, and from references to prosecutions, letters and notices which mention specific denominations and issues. Only a few pertinent distinguishing characteristics are pointed out with respect to each counterfeit known to the author. It would be appreciated if readers would be kind enough to acquaint the author with any unlisted or doubtful specimens.



May 10, 1775, \$30: Engraved and pale appearance. Top of second **L** in **BILL** lower than top of first **L**. Base of letters in **Philadelphia** uneven. **Period** instead of comma after **May 10**. On the reverse the second **h** in **Philadelphia** is perfect instead of resembling the letter **k** as in the originals.

November 22, 1775, \$5: In vignette little finger of hand extends far to the right of the center branch instead of ending just left of it (Fictitious date).

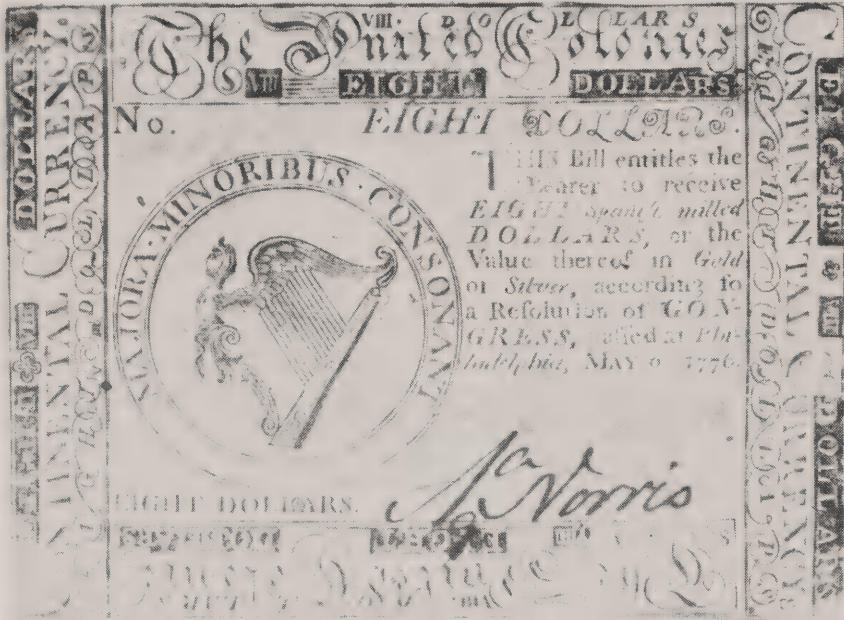
February 17, 1776, \$2/3: No plate letter. (Only information from Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. V, p. 258 and Vol. XI, p. 234.)

February 17, 1776, \$4: Crude. No description. (Only information from Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. V, p. 258, Vol. XI, p. 234 and Pennsylvania Gazette of July 16, 1777.)

Plate B. One of **G** in **CONGRESS** very low. Second **PH** in **PHILADELPHIA** much larger than other letters on same line. Baseline of **February** very wavy. Very crude.

Period after 1775 is lower than center line of figures.

May 9, 1776, \$8: Engraved on whitish paper containing mica. In second to there is an old style **n** instead of a **t**. **G** instead of **C** in **GONGRESS**. Top of 1



in date higher than tops of 77.

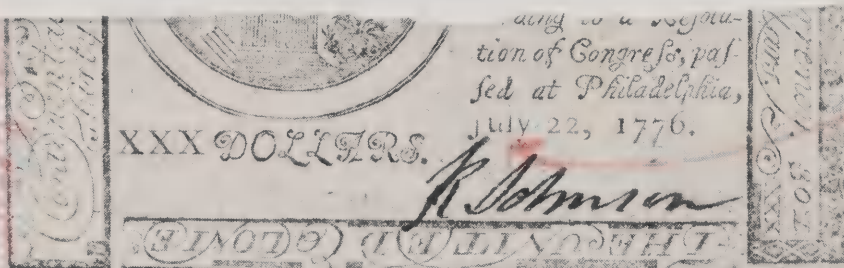
May 9, 1776, \$8: Engraved. Top of **T** in **EIGHT** beneath top border is straight instead of curved. **B** in **Bearer** partly under left upright of **H** in **THIS** instead of to right of upright.

July 22, 1776, \$7: Base of **V** in first **SEVEN** very high. Second **S** in **SPANISH** tilts right. Second **7** in date lower than first.

30⁰⁰ July 22, 1776 (Change order of counterfeit)
Make #1 into #2, and #2 into #1

the new #2 should read:

Previous counterfeit corrected by substituting capitals in place of lower case letters in **ULY** and moving **J** in **JULY** under **e** of passed. **L** in **BILL** ^{and} **I** in **THIRTY** put in line with adjacent letters. All other defects remain.

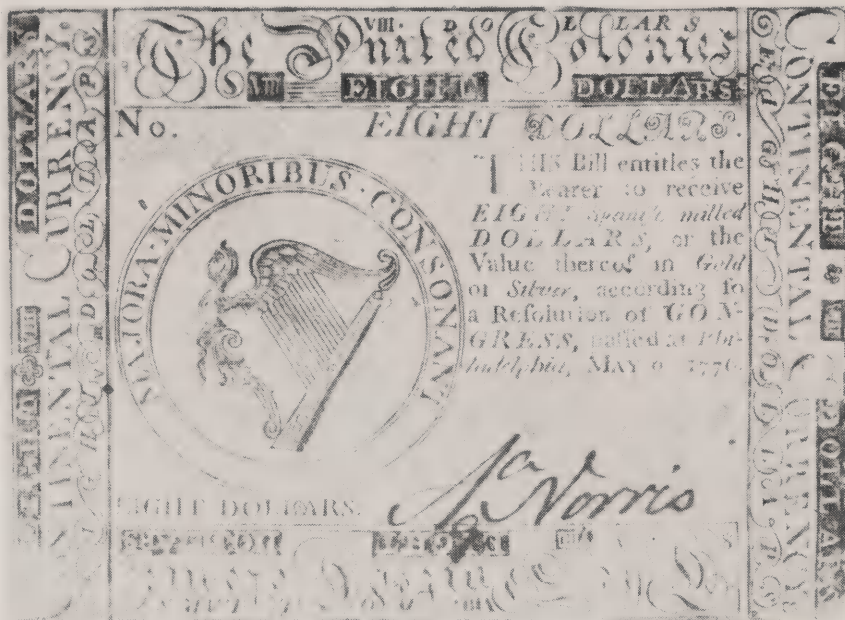


J in **July** under second **s** in passed. ^{and ULY is in lower instead of upper case letters}
July 22, 1776, \$30: Very crude with text in wavy lines. **ULY** in **JULY** in

May 20, 1777, \$8: Engraved. Base of second **I** in **MINORIBUS** is high. Base



May 9, 1776, \$8: Engraved on whitish paper containing mica. In second to there is an old style s instead of a t. G instead of C in GONGRESS. Top of 1



in date higher than tops of 77.

May 9, 1776, \$8: Engraved. Top of T in EIGHT beneath top border is straight instead of curved. B in Bearer partly under left upright of H in THIS instead of to right of upright.

July 22, 1776, \$7: Base of V in first SEVEN very high. Second S in SPANISH tilts right. Second 7 in date lower than first 7.

July 22, 1776, \$30: In the text of the base of O in DOLLARS is level with the other letters instead of being low. Tops of ongre in Congress form a curving line.

July 22, 1776, \$30: Base of LL high in BILL. In text I in THIRTY is high.



J in July under second s in passed. and ULY is in lower

July 22, 1776, \$30: Very crude with text in wavy lines. ULY in JULY in

capitals rather than lower case.

February 26, 1777, \$5: Only information from *Virginia Gazette* of May 15, 1778 (Dixon and Hunter); May 29, 1778 (Purdie.)

February 26, 1777, \$30: Engraved. In the date the base of 6 is level instead of higher than the 2. In **SI** in the motto the tail of the **S** is flat and extended.

February 26, 1777, \$30: Engraved. On reverse **Sellors** is misspelled. (Only information from *Connecticut Courant* of November 10, 1778.)

May 20, 1777, \$6: Engraved. Many words in text are uneven and too small. Base of **V** in **Value** is high above base line instead of being level with it. Under vignette the period following **DOLLARS** is missing.

May 20, 1777, \$8: Engraved. Base of second **I** in **MINORIBUS** is high. Base



line of harp rises to right instead of being horizontal. Words in text are too short. **O** and **E** in **CONGRESS** are low.

May 20, 1777, \$30: Deceptive counterfeit with broken **M** in **May** as in

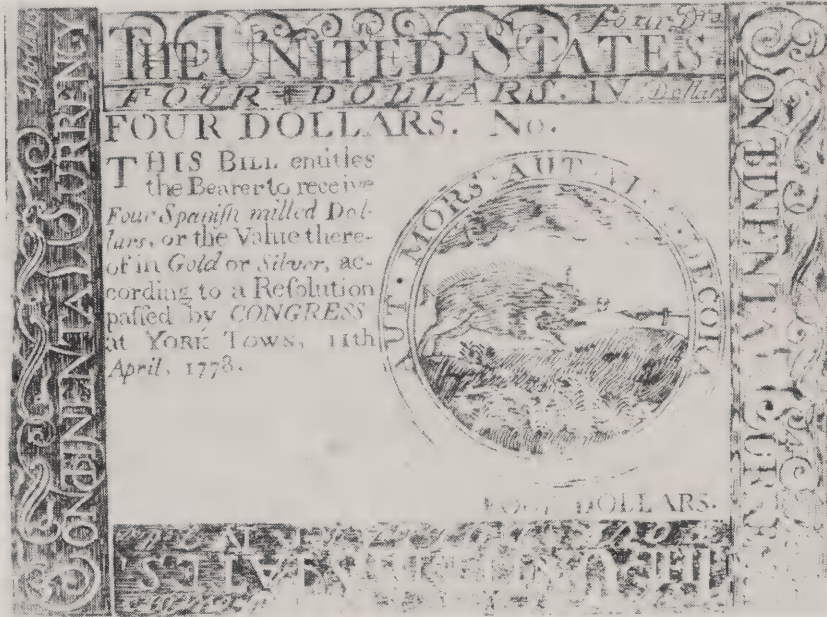


genuine. Bottom of **S** in **FACIES** touches circle instead of being clear of line. **Y** in second **THIRTY** slightly higher rather than slightly lower than **T**. Top of **f** in **thereof** same distance from border as comma above while on genuine **f** is much closer. Dot over second **i** in **Philadelphia** under center of lower curve of **s** above rather than just left of it.

July 2, 1777, \$30: Period instead of comma after **July 2**. Philadelphia (Fictitious date).

12th March, 1778, \$40: In first **Dollars** base of **ars** is high. No comma after **March**. Yorktown (Fictitious date).

11th April, 1778, \$4: Crudely engraved. **R** touches **S** in **MORS**. Top of



oversized **h** in second **the** higher than bottom of **p** in **Spanish**.

11th April, 1778, \$5: Engraved. In **SPANISH** the **A** is too short and too



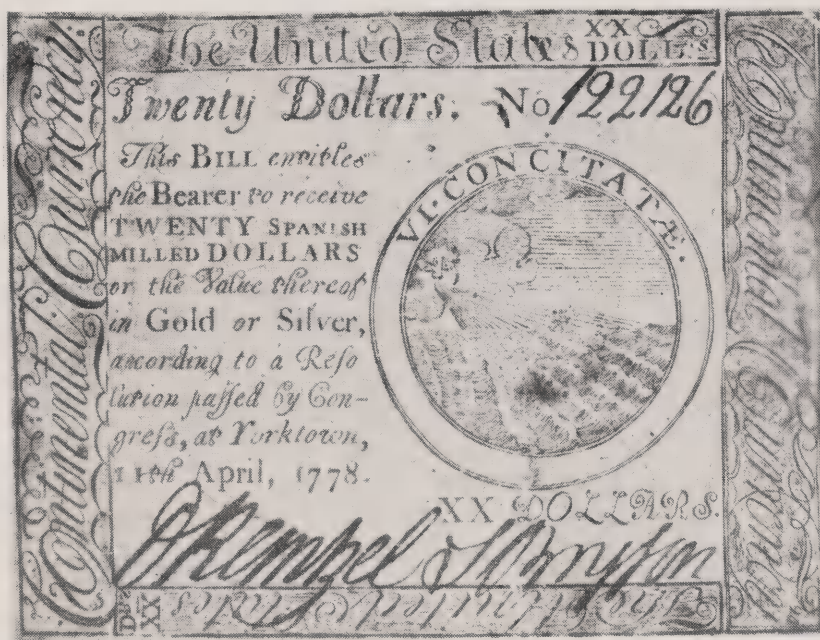
near **N**. First **S** in **CONGRESS** smaller than second **S**. No comma after **April**.

11th April, 1778, \$7: Crudely engraved. Tail of s in **Resolution** sweeps under



R. Second S in **CONGRESS** tilts to right.

11th April, 1778, \$20: Engraved. Base of second l in first **Dollars** is in line



instead of higher than baseline. Base of second **L** in second **DOLLARS** lower than first **L**. *A and S in DOLLARS are too small.*

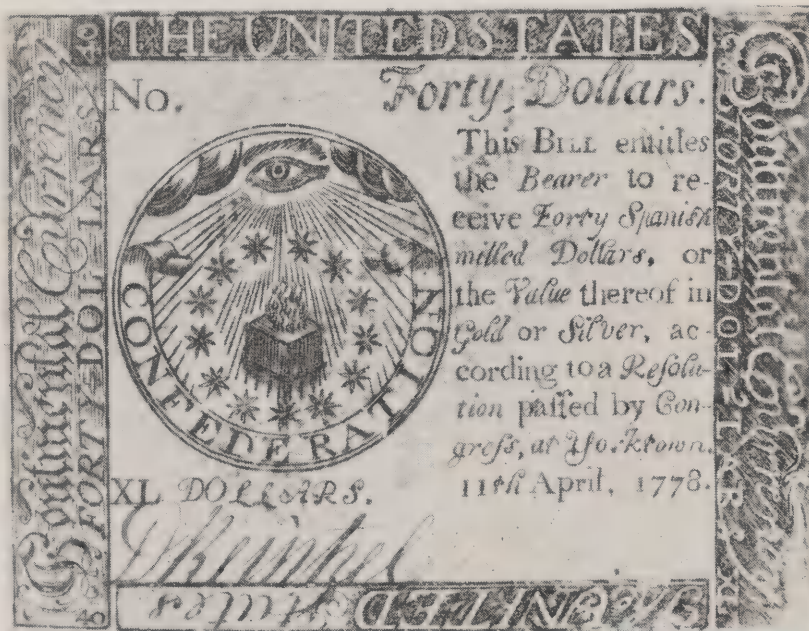
Continental Currency on right border black instead of white. (Described in official documents)

11th April, 1778, \$40: Deceptive. In the first **Forty** the **r** is almost in register with **o** instead of being much higher. Tail of **y** in first **Forty** turns sharply up-



ward from horizontal instead of curving. Right base of first **N** in **CONFEDERATION** is high. The reverse has four instead of five pairs of leaves and one top leaf on the large twig.

11th April, 1778, \$40: Crudely engraved. In the first **Forty** the **r** is in register with **o** instead of being much higher. The lower third of **re** in **receive**



is below base of **to**. Second **s** of **passed** higher than first **s**. The reverse properly has five pairs of leaves and one top leaf on the large twig although the official 1779 broadside describes the reverse as having four pairs like the previously described counterfeit \$40. Whether this means that the same obverse was used in combination with two different reverses or is an error will be clarified when a specimen of the type officially described is found.

11th April, 1778, \$40: The office of this denomination and issue whole of the Bill are very irregular, and almost all the lines crooked too low." The balance of the description of the paper.



Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: In Spanish the r. Comma after second Dollars of r in Congress.

Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: Second L in m in milled slopes down to right. Base of D.

Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: B in BILL Dollars. Left side of b in by just left tip of a.

September 26th, 1778, \$50: Base adjacent to. Base of alu in Value slope

September 26th, 1778, \$50: Type (Only information from Connecticut)

September 26th, 1778, \$60: Deceit right of dot of i in milled below. Base instead of lower than base of adjacent

September 26th, 1778, \$60: First according is low.

14th January, 1779, \$80: Crude. I between in GOLD.

14th January, 1779, \$80: Upright of right of upright of E below. Tail below instead of to the right of f.

Base of letters bias in Philadelphia rises to right

Comma after Philadelphia omitted.

September 26th, 1778 \$50: Comma after Philadelphia omitted.

Base of Bearer much higher than base of adjacent to.

Bases of alu in value slope down to right. (Described in Connecticut Courant of March 14, 1780, p.3)

Previous counterfeit corrected

September 26th, 1778 \$50

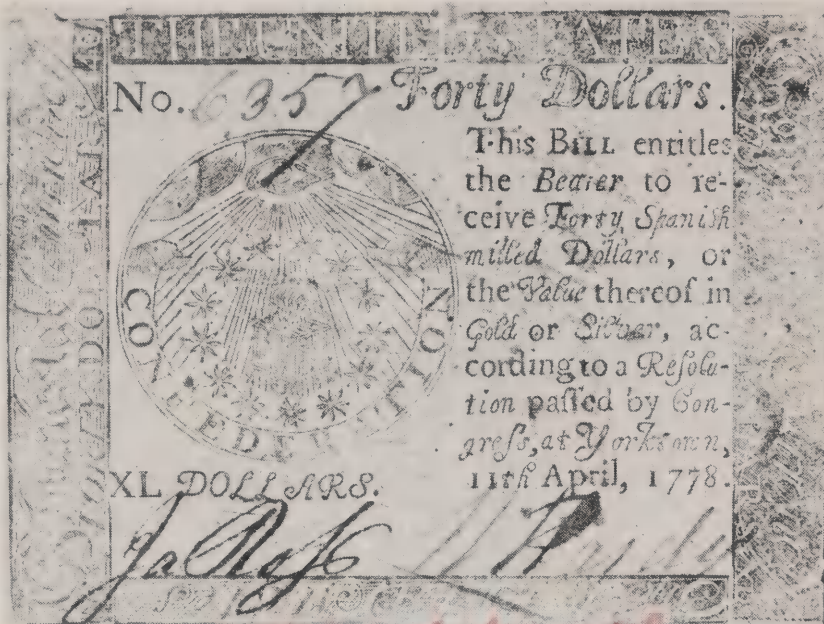
by inserted
so as to
the same

LOUIS

B. 408

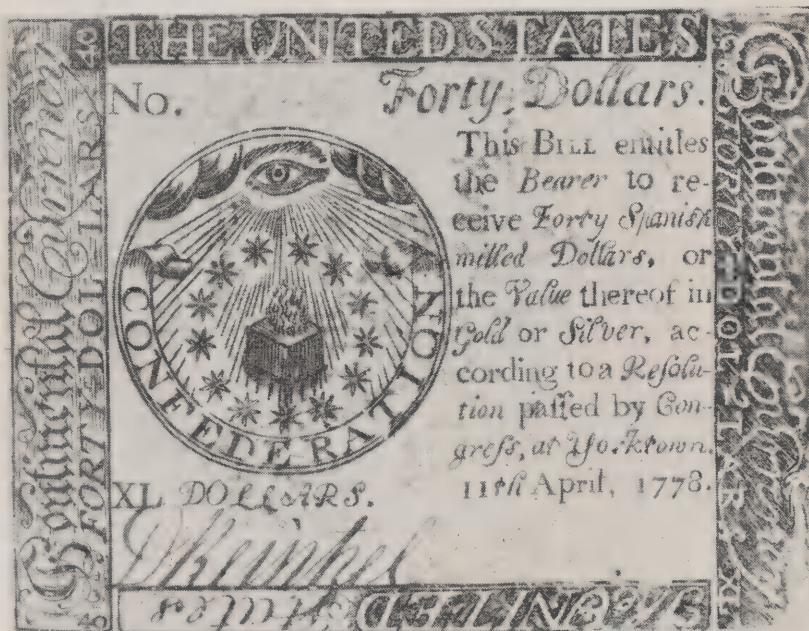
sent and Approved

11th April, 1778, \$40: Deceptive. In the first **Forty** the **r** is almost in register with **o** instead of being much higher. Tail of **y** in first **Forty** turns sharply up-



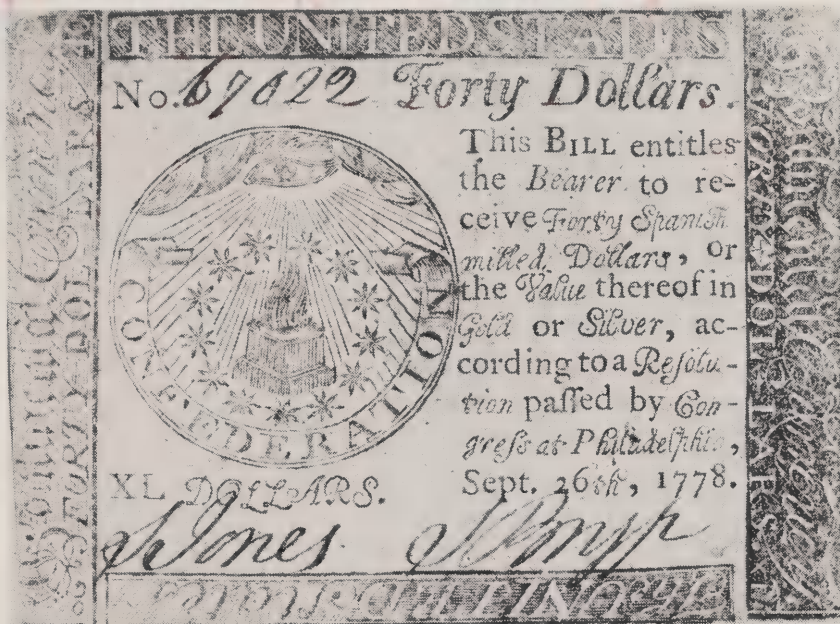
ward from horizontal instead of ~~curving~~. Right base of first **N** in **CONFEDERATION** is high. The reverse has four instead of five pairs of leaves and one top leaf on the large twig.

11th April, 1778, \$40: Crudely engraved. In the first **Forty** the **r** is in register with **o** instead of being much higher. The lower third of **re** in **receive**



is below base of **to**. Second **s** of **passed** higher than first **s**. The reverse properly has five pairs of leaves and one top leaf on the large twig although the official 1779 broadside describes the reverse as having four pairs like the previously described counterfeit \$40. Whether this means that the same obverse was used in combination with two different reverses or is an error will be clarified when a specimen of the type officially described is found.

11th April, 1778, \$40: The official 1779 broadside describes a third counterfeit of this denomination and issue as follows: "The Letters however in the whole of the Bill are very irregular, several being larger than the adjoining ones, and almost all the lines crooked, some being placed too high and others too low." The balance of the description is unreadable because of disintegration of the paper.



Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: In Spanish the **h** is over the **o** of **or** rather than the **r**. Comma after second **Dollars** opposite top of **s**. **S** in **Sept.** under **g** instead of **r** in **Congress**.

Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: Second **L** of **BILL** is not as high as first **L**. Base of **m** in **milled** slopes down to right. Base of **o** in second **Dollars** higher than base of **D**.

Sept. 26th, 1778, \$40: **B** in **BILL** under left side instead of center of **D** in **Dollars**. Left side of **b** in **by** just left of **R** in **Resolution** instead of under right tip of **a**.

September 26th, 1778, \$50: Base of **Bearer** much higher than base of adjacent **to**. Base of **alu** in **Value** slopes down to right.

September 26th, 1778, \$50: Typeset. Comma after **Philadelphia** omitted. (Only information from *Connecticut Courant*, March 14, 1780, p. 3.)

September 26th, 1778, \$60: Deceptive. Dot of **i** in **receive** left instead of right of dot of **i** in **milled** below. Base of **x** in second **Sixty** in register with instead of lower than base of adjacent **t**.

September 26th, 1778, \$60: **First** or slants downward to right. First **e** in according is low.

14th January, 1779, \$80: Crude. In first **Eighty** **ht** tilts to right. No space between **inGOLD**.

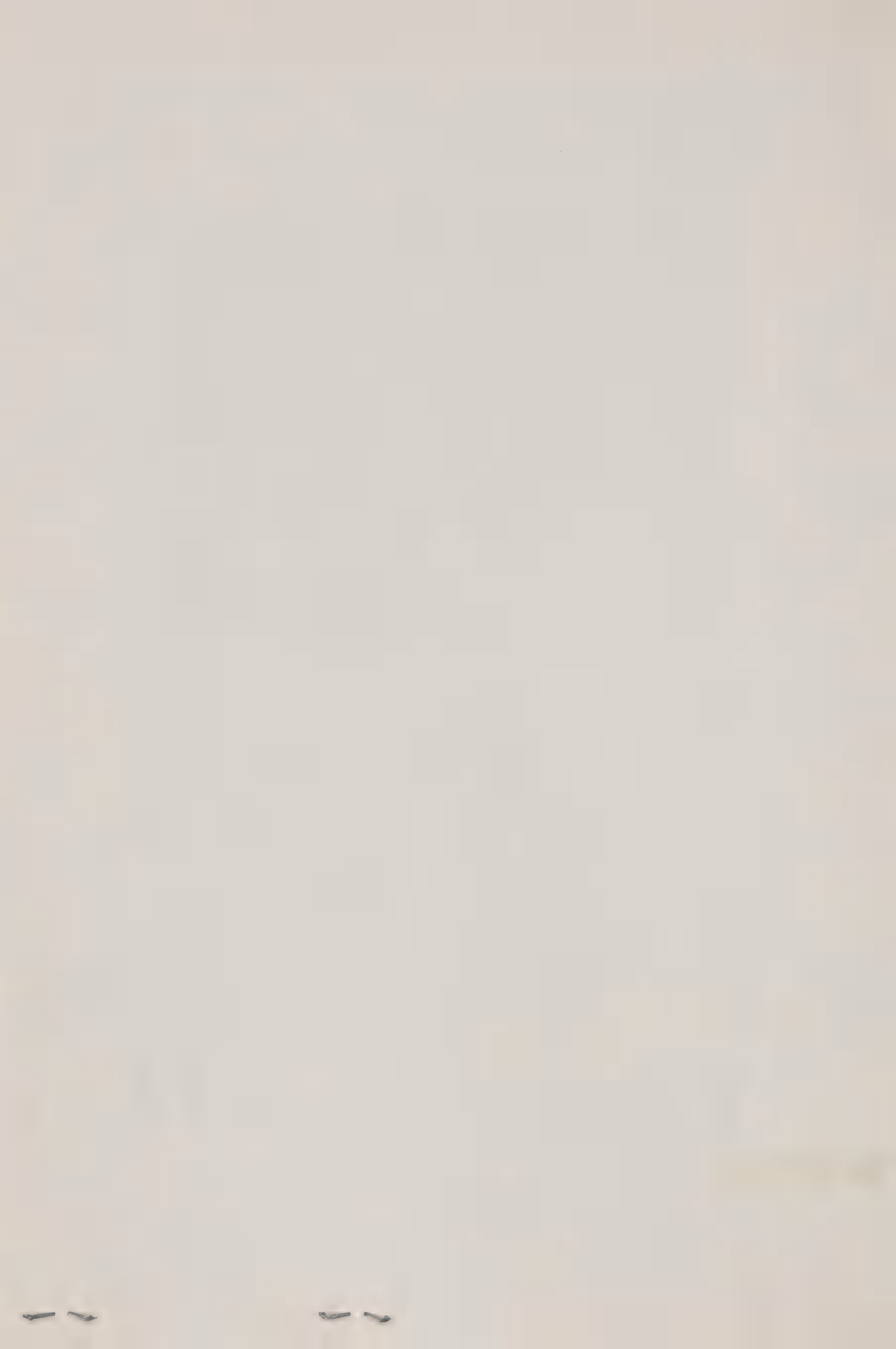
14th January, 1779, \$80: Upright of **t** in first **Eighty** slightly left instead of right of upright of **E** below. Tail of **R** in **Resolution** ends over center of **f** below instead of to the right of **f**.

SEPT. 26th, 1778, \$40: End of long of second L of Dollars almost horizontal - instead of sloping down to right. Base of m in milled higher than base of o in second Dollars. Base of o in second Dollars higher than base of D. Adjacent border higher after Con slopes down to right. A - CONFEDERATION small.

Complete "p" in possible - curly p.

Left end of V in receive curls. Engulfing lower part of p in possible is missing. Left end of V in receive curls down instead of up.

See notes up side original



Off in British
Museum Collection



B.M.
ctf

not in British Museum
collection



DESCRIPTION OF COUNTERFEIT BILLS,

Which were done in Imitation of the True Ones ordered by the Honorable
the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,

Bearing Date 20th May, 1777, and 11th April, 1778.

EIGHT Dollar Bill, dated May 20, 1777, signed Jn. Taylor and Aq. Norris, is done from a Copperplate, the Letters of which are not only irregular, but by having been engraved, appear more delicate than in the true Bills, which are done with Type, have a smaller appearance, especially in the Words "*Spanish milled, Silver, Philadelphia,*" &c.—The Figures 1777, as well on the back as the front, appear less than in the true Bills.—In the Border at the Top of the Bill over the Words "United States," the two L's in the Word "Dollars" are more irregular and more from a straight Line than in the true Bills.

Six Dollar Bills, dated May 20, 1777, signed Jn. Taylor and Aq. Norris, or R. Smith and A. M'Callister, or G. Young and C. Lewis, are also done from a Copperplate, the Letters of which appear for the same Reason more delicate than in the true Bills, and are also more irregular, particularly the Word "entitles," which stands higher than the rest of the line, and the V in the Word "Value" is placed too high and not on a line with the rest of the Word.—After the Words "Six Dollars" under the Device in the true Bills there is a full stop, in the Counterfeits there is none.—On the Back of the Bill the Leaf is much plainer in the Counterfeits than in the true Bills, the Letters there being also more delicate, and the Figures "1777" have a smaller Appearance than in the genuine Bills.

Forty Dollar Bill, dated April 11, 1778, signed D. Reintzel and S. Bryson, or D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, done from a Copperplate, of which the same Remark may be made as to the Delicacy or Neatness of the Letters as in the preceeding Descriptions.—Yet the whole of the Letters in the Words "THE UNITED STATES," in the top Border of the Bill, appear stronger, tho' not so uniform or so well shaped as those in the true Bills.—In the Border at the right hand (or end) of the Counterfeit Bill the Words "FORTY DOLLARS" (which are in white Letters) are ill done, besides having an E instead of an F in the same.—The larger Leaf on the Back of the true Bills having beside the Branch at the upper end, five Branches on each Side of the Stem, the lowermost of which are not very plain and smaller than the rest; the two last mentioned are entirely omitted in these Counterfeits.

Another species of the Forty Dollar Bills of the same date, signed D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, also done from a Copperplate, of which the same Remark may be made as to the Delicacy or Neatness of the Letters as in the former Descriptions. The Letters however in the whole of the Bill are very irregular, several being larger than the adjoining ones, and almost all the lines crooked, some being placed too high and others too low. In the Border at the right Hand of the Counterfeit Bill the white Letters FORTY DOLLARS are ill done and irregular; the O and particularly the first L in the word "DOLLARS" being smaller than the rest.—The Remark in the Description of the first Forty Dollar Bill as to the white Letters in the top Border of the Bill, may also with Justice be made here, viz. That they appear stronger tho' not so uniform or so well shaped as those in the true Bills, particularly the A having the first Stroke broader than the last.—As to the large Leaf on the Back of the Bill, the Reverse of what was observed in the Description of the first Forty Dollar Bill may be noticed here, as the whole of the Leaf, as well as the two bottom Branches thereof, are all considerably more plain and distinct than in the true Bills; and the ground Work (Back of the Leaf) more plain and coarser, tho' not so regular.—The Letters in the Words "Printed by HALL & SELLERS" are more delicate

and are differently shaped than in the true Bills.

Of the Twenty Dollar Bills, dated the 11th April, 1778, signed D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, or D. Reintzel and S. Bryson, done from a Copperplate, the same Remark may be made as to the Delicacy of the Letters as in the preceeding Descriptions, and may be easily discovered from the true Bills, as the Ornaments as well as the Words "Continental Currency," in the Borders to the left and those on the right Hand of the Bill are both black, whereas in the true Bills those to the left Hand are black and those to the right Hand are white; the Counterfeits indeed left the broad Strokes in the two C's in the Border at the right Hand of the Bill, as well as a few of the Ornaments in the same, open, as if they had intended them for white.—Some of those Bills have Particles of gold Leaf thrown here and there upon them, in Imitation of the Iinglafs on the genuine Bills.

The Eight Dollar Bill, dated 11th April, 1778, signed D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, is also done from a Copperplate, and therefore the like Remark may be made as to the Delicacy of the Letters, as is already mentioned.—The Letter G in the Word "Gold" is not only too large in Proportion to the rest of the Word, but is placed too low, it not being in a Line with the rest.—In the Border at the Top of the Bill, under and between the Words "THE" and "UNITED," is placed a black S instead of a white S.

Of the Five Dollar Bill, dated 11th April, 1778, signed D. Reintzel and J. Snowden, done from a Copperplate, the same may be observed as in the preceeding Descriptions, respecting the Delicacy of the Letters, with this that they differ very much in Shape or Countenance from the Type, beside being evidently irregular; the A in the Word "SPANISH" and the R and the e in the Word "Resolution" being too low and not on a Line with the rest of the Word.—The Cuts of the Leaves on the Back of the genuine Bill are done from real Leaves, as the Fibres readily shew; whereas those in the Counterfeits appear not like Nature but like Imitations, the Strokes for the Fibres being too regular.

Another Counterfeit Forty Dollar Bill, dated 11th April, 1778, is signed J. Duncan and R. Davis, (who by the bye were never signers of Continental Money) the Back of which appears as if done from a Copperplate, and the Words in the front as if done with Types; the Borders and Devices as if cut in Metal. I am sorry to say that this Bill is rather so good an Imitation that it is really dangerous to most People. I will however point out a few other Marks, viz. The first N in the Word *Confederation* (in the Device) is not placed so square as in the true Bills, the left Stroke of the said Letter leaning more than it should do, indeed the whole of the Letters of the Word *Confederation* are not quite so bold as those in the genuine Bills. The Stars in the Device appear more open in the Center of each of them than those in the true Bills, which appear mostly closed. In the Word Forty at the Top of the Bill the Tail of the y in the Counterfeits comes nearer to the Bottom of the t than in the true Bills; the o in the same Word appears on a Level with the rest of the Word, whilst in the true Bills it is placed rather lower than the r which follows it. In this Counterfeit (like one of the others) the larger Leaf on the Back (exclusive of the top Branch) has but four Branches on each Side thereof, while the true Bills have five Branches on each Side, of which the two lowermost are the most faint, as is already mentioned.

Note: In some of the Bills of different Denominations D. Remzell is signed for D. Reintzell. It may be further necessary to observe that it is very probable there may be other Names affixed as Signers to some or all of the different Denominations than are noticed in the preceeding Descriptions, having mentioned in the foregoing only such as I have seen.

Some Persons in the United States having been much alarmed on comparing of Bills of Credit, by finding Bills of the same Denomination and Date to differ from each other in respect to the Letters, some having broken Letters and others not, and frequent Conclusions having been drawn that the former were true Bills, and the broken Letters were originally made as private or secret Marks: It is therefore become necessary to inform, That those were not intended as Marks, but that at the first Beginning of printing an Emission the Letters were whole, and that during printing the Emission, from hard Lumps or Gravel or Sand in the Paper, with the Force of the Press, those Letters at different Times were accidentally and unobservedly broken.

*Permit no copy of these Descriptions
to be taken unless at the request of the
Executive Authority of the State to be
placed in confidential hands.*

John Hancock
Samuel Adams

154 California St.
Stratford, Conn.
August 17 1938.

Friend Freeman:

I have had a time of my life with the contents of your last letter, and I suppose you have just about returned from the big Convention and are ready to hear from me. You may call me radical in my views of old bills and probably will differ with me, but we can still be friends just the same. Now to start with the photostat subject.

I agree with you in thinking that there is no evidence of the reverse with the note on its back being in the nature of a counterfeit, but here we do not agree. I can't see how by any possible chance it can be the reverse of the 5 pound bill marked four times counterfeit. for the cut edge of the indent when the two photostats are placed back to back must be an absolute match and even if one were varied in size a trifle in photostating the proportion would be all right and in this case it does not take much of an eye to see that the cut on the counterfeit obverse is quite noticeably deeper, and the shape at the ends is different.

It is my opinion that that reverse is that of a Massachusetts bill. I should hardly expect to see a note of that character from Boston in Suffolk Co. in Mass. on the back of a Conn. note. Whether the Brookline on the note refers to Brookline now a suburb or a real portion of Boston to-day I cannot say.

Now for "¹²Heiroglyphics". I have had lots of fun with them. and can't help you much I am sorry to say, and the plain signatures you know as well as I do. The Bridgeport library has no Philadelphia directory of that period, so I examined the first census of the U. S. of 1790 which of course is more than ten years later than the signatures, but it may help some after all. I make no claim that the names I found are the individuals on the bills. On the Jan. 1790 \$80 I found Joseph Burden the only Burden given in the census. Here is what I found for the \$8 May 20 1777 Casper Heiner (note spelling) the only C. Heiner given. No T. Warren given. but two Francis Warrens one of East Nantmill Township, Chester County. and the other Coventry Township, Chester County. I am inclined to think the signature is an F for note the heavy spot where it joins the upright of the W. On the \$2 bills of the same issue I found no C. Parr (perhaps he was dead) The name below is illegible. I found Joseph Hiester (note spelling) I consider the name below as a duplicate of that on the \$8 bill. On the 6 dollar bill there was no need of looking up William Hardy but neither I nor any one else that I have showed it to can make out the name below. I made guesses and looked up the guess names in the census but to no avail. No more luck either with either name on the \$60 bill guess or no guess. They are certainly tough ones. The scrawl on the \$40 bill is beyond me. I forgot to say that Joseph Burden was given as a Wool Comber Grays Alley, Philadelphia City. and that Casper Heiner was of Reading Borough Berks County.

Now for my opinion, (you may not like it) but if the blue sheet of the issue of Sept 26 1778 which we both own is worth a straw as a counterfeit detector the \$40 and the \$60 are fakes, even if they do look good. Compare the \$40 with the blue sheet and notice,

OBVERSE

Border bars spaced farther from each other.
Vignette slightly farther from vertical bar, and X very much farther from bar.
Shading on right side of altar has many more lines.
ars of the large type Dollars has a downward slant.
Letters of the first "or" not at all in register.
N of No. much farther from left vertical border.

h of Spanish very much farther from right vertical border.

Gomma after the second word Dollars way high.

Right vertical border more distant from the wording in the lines

Con of Congress is way low.

b of by much different in relation to R of Resolution above it.

REVERSE

In the paragraph characters the vertical lines are far more distant.

Ornamental line below big square more nearly parallel to it.

P of printed far below ornamental line above.

y of by not over middle of top of ornament directly beneath.

No trace of mica or silk as all true Continentals have (either obv. or rev.)

\$60 OBVERSE

Letters of cording in according vary greatly in size.

1778 stands in different relation to letters of Philadelphia above.

t of Sixty not under the upright of B in Bearer as on blue sheet.

Base of V in Silver varies greatly in position with regard to R in Resolution.

in, in the word in, cants down and tips to right.

In lower horizontal border the D is much wider.

In left verticle border the script T does not reach border.

REVERSE

S in Sixty noticably larger.

Double dagger marks much too low in relation to S of Sixty.

Parallel lines left of double dagger farther apart.

P of Printed much nearer paragraph character than on blue sheet.

Left tops of P and H have loops but not on blue sheet.

I think every one of the May 20 1777 bills are unquestionably genuine. We are both lucky to have an accurate photostat for comparison.

I am enclosing my \$80 bill for you to compare with the one sent, It is not right for me to condemn either one, as I have nothing to go by, but one of them will not stand muster. What is your opinion? I am comparing the crossed off bill with mine.

\$80 OBVERSE

In circular vignette EC of SECULORUM and SE of SECULA and LO and RE and SC of FLORESCEBIT are more distant.

The f of the word of, is directly under the tail of R in Resolution instead of under its center.

In left vertical border S of STATES is closer to edge.

In lower horizontal border A of AMERICA is low.

Right hand flourish of second A in AMERICA in upper horizontal border is much different.

REVERSE

Deep scallop on top of leaf.

Base of cross at left of Eighty very much nearer square.

Top of E in Eighty in different relation with ornament above.

Bottom of y in by, much more distant from top of H in SELLERS.

I have thoroughly enjoyed all this, and wish I had more of it to do. If you ever dispose of any Continental fakes please give me first choice.

I am waiting to hear what a fine time you had at the Convention.


Hope if you come east this fall you will drop in on me.

It has been more than "beastly hot" as you expressed it, right here in the Nutmeg state.

Enclosed find your seven notes,

Yours truly,

John A. Richardson,

~~2~~ Very crude ~~Leaves show~~
11/22/75 Continental Cty
on my list 

FIVE much larger than DOWNS
below circular cut. Both same size
on originals.

first two lines of text closer than others
~~Right~~ ~~leaf~~ ~~on the same size~~ ~~note~~ V in leaf cut omitted

Cont Cont Currency Gas & Oil

1963

British ship "Polly" was going up Delaware
+ was boarded + had cases of Cty Cont Currency
in hold

Conn Wood 1/26/62

Richard T. Hoover

p 33

Cty Continental
N.J. Archives
2nd Series Vol 2 p 36

1964

Continental #30⁰⁰ - dated
2/26/77 Baltimore issue
Counterfeit. Smooth paper
BALTIMORE is larger
Copper plate engraving
Spanish Dollars
irregularly written

Stem of leaf on reverse
Reverse points both left and right on
Specimens of July 22, 1776 cty \$7⁰⁰

Stemson reverse of \$5 etp
Feb 26, 1777 print to left
On only one I have seen. That is wrong

11/22/75 Cont Currency
counterfeit

V in leaf cut on reverse omitted
Below vignette
FIVE much larger than ^{rather than same size as} DOLLARS
~~below vignette~~

Thomas L. Elder "Vicissitudes of Continental Paper Money"

The Numismatist Vol 38 p 216 Apr 1925

~~see Jan 1937~~

this is
on other
continentals

Copper plate for Cont Currency

#30 Nov 2, 1776

Illustrated
in Numismatist Mar 1930 p 154 Vol 43

Declared a ctf by John M. Richardson
in Sept, 1932 Numismatist p. 566 Vol 45

First line of text
~~The word~~ "This Bill entitles" is written ~~twice~~
over a prior engraving of the words
"This Bill entitles the".

Mar.
1962 discovery

Counterfeit

\$5 Feb. 26, 1777 Poorly engraved bill. N, higher than adjacent o in No and following period is missing. Comma after second DOLLARS missing. Last S in CONGRESS low. In Baltimore the e is much smaller than the e in Feb. Mistakes in I of SUSTINE and B in ABSTINE copied. On Reverse O in DOLLARS is too large. Style very similar to \$5 counterfeit of April 11, 1778.

This note is described in the Virginia Gazette (See my list).

\$6.00 5/20/77 Altered to May 22, 1777 to avoid demonetization of May 20, 1777 issue.

Jan 1963
Freeman group
9/26/78 ~~\$50~~ \$50 In the corrected cty the last three letters of Philadelphia are normal and not sloping down to right.

11/20/75 \$5 - Crudely engraved. ← Insert it.

Jan 1963
Freeman
7/22/76 \$30⁰⁰ Crude engraved. ^{the words, Bearer and to,} ~~Bearer to have~~
~~space between them.~~ and the value and thereof,
Silver and ac., have no space between them.
There is a space between re and ceive in receive.

9/26/78 \$60⁰⁰ Insert fact that base of Silver
is far below ^{base of} preceding ~~of~~ or.

Bills =
~~imitations~~
Counterfeits with printed signatures are, not included
~~as counterfeit~~ listed

all imitations of a later period and are

Ford Museum 1963
Continental

#8 Yorktown counterfeit

Top of last ~~S~~ ^S of CONGRESS in text
~~and~~ lower than previous S

O in MINORIBUS off center
not symmetrical
Crude engraved bill

~~Base~~ under top border
Base of D in EIGHT DOLLARS, lower
than adjacent O

Maryland Historical Society has
#7 reverse of 1776 "says Cohen"
/